

**THE NEXT PEACE OPERATION:
U.S. AIR FORCE ISSUES AND
PERSPECTIVES**

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this twenty-fifth volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). The United States faces an uneasy period of transition advancing into the post-Cold War era, and frequent involvement in the broad array of peace operations and other operations at the lower end of the conflict spectrum has become a central task for the U.S. military. Because of our essential lift, humanitarian relief, and communications and command and control capabilities, the USAF is involved in these operations virtually every time the U.S. government commits its support. Further, U.S. airpower is a primary, if not *the* primary, instrument of choice for enforcing sanctions and seeking military leverage in support of political objectives in many of these situations. For all of these reasons, this is an important and timely paper that deserves careful consideration in planning and conducting USAF missions in support of peace operations.

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JAMES M. SMITH
Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peace operations continue to evolve. With each successive operation, doctrine and organizational arrangements are updated to reflect past experiences. The traditional peacekeeping conducted during the Cold War is largely a thing of the past; new forms of conflict and new participants have changed the nature of peacekeeping dramatically. In few cases can blue-helmeted observers from non-US countries expect to merely stand between two warring states and observe a cease-fire. Modern peacekeeping frequently involves non-state actors, often within a single country, and may include missions such as humanitarian assistance, refugee resettlement, demining, and nation-building. American involvement has increased significantly since the end of the Cold War, and the participation of civilian and private relief agencies adds new stresses to operational principles such as “objective” and “unity of command.” The United States military will have to be flexible enough to support peace operations with varying operational objectives and constraints.

This study examines the role of the Air Force in future peace operations. For simplicity’s sake, it uses the term “peacekeeping” to encompass both impartial *peacekeeping* and more coercive *peace enforcement*. The authors draw upon the experience of the US and other nations to improve understanding of how peacekeeping forces operate and shed light on how best to employ American forces. This paper reviews existing US military doctrine and examines the impact, both positive and negative, that peacekeeping has on combat readiness. The authors then suggest areas for consideration regarding the preparation for and conduct of peace operations.

An extensive literature review provided the foundation for this study. It was supplemented by an understanding of current missions,

policies, and doctrine gained through interviews with military members and civilian policymakers at the United Nations and the Departments of Defense and State, and with scholars in this field. The validity of the initial research was tested in field visits to the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Vicenza, Italy, which oversees NATO air operations in the Balkan region, and to Task Force Eagle and the 401st Expeditionary Air Base Group (401st EABG), the US Army and Air Force operations headquartered near Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, that are part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR). These visits allowed the authors to meet with commanders and their forces and observe operations firsthand.

Below is a brief list summarizing the authors' main conclusions and recommendations for US Air Force participation in peace operations.

- Air Force doctrine designed specifically for peace operations is not required so long as appropriate doctrine for various functional areas is incorporated into strategies and operation plans.
- Coercive airpower can play a role in peace operations, but the most powerful contribution of airpower is likely to come through air mobility.
- The ability to rapidly redeploy personnel and equipment from a peace operation to a major theater war is critical, and should be considered when designing operation plans.
- There is no need for Air Force units to be specifically designated for peace support operations.
- Commanders must carefully analyze mission objectives and the threat environment to determine the best mix of forces, rather than simply using all available assets.
- Current rotation policies are effective, especially for support personnel in all but the highest-demand career fields, and allow more Air Force members to gain operational experience without placing an impossible strain upon them.

- The use of reserve component forces in peace operations, especially among support forces, could be substantially increased.
- Far from reducing combat effectiveness, training for and participating in peace operations can be performed with little adverse impact on readiness, and in many cases may improve Air Force members' readiness for combat.

Dag Hammarskjold, former Secretary-General of the UN, once said “peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only a soldier can do it.” As long as the American government and public feel that peace operations will help promote national security interests, the US military will be called upon to participate in those missions alongside many other agencies. This paper neither advocates the use of US military forces for peace operations nor recommends they not be employed. Rather, it addresses the current reality, and it should help military members understand the very unusual tasks they will no doubt be called upon to perform in the next peace operation.

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A number of people in the United States offered us their insight on the role of the Air Force and the military in general. Colonel Richard Roan, USMC, the Military Advisor to the US Ambassador to the United Nations, offered to meet and discuss the functioning of the UN. Many of our interviews at the UN were made possible by Captain Greg Gilletti, USAF, who is assigned to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and who opened a number of doors for us that might otherwise have remained closed. Professor Dave Davis and the faculty at George Mason University's Program on Peacekeeping Policy reviewed our findings

from Bosnia, as did Bert Braun and Andy Bair of the State Department. Their assistance helped us interpret the new, and sometimes contradictory, data we had collected

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